

## IF YOUR PET HAS BITTEN SOMEONE

- ❖ Tell the person bitten to see a doctor immediately and to follow the advice on the previous pages. Report the bite to the local health department. If your pet is a dog, cat, or ferret they will probably have you confine the animal and watch it closely for 10 days. Report any illness or unusual behavior to your local health department and veterinarian immediately.
- ❖ Don't let the animal stray, and don't give the animal away. It must be available for observation by public health authorities.
- ❖ Don't kill your pet or allow it to be killed unless you have been instructed to do so by the public health authorities or a veterinarian.
- ❖ Check with your veterinarian to find out if your pet has a current vaccination.
- ❖ **After** the recommended observation period, have your pet vaccinated for rabies if it does not have a current rabies vaccination.



## YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR

- ❖ It's critically important that you notify your family doctor immediately after an animal bite. Your doctor can find out if the animal has been captured. If necessary, your doctor will give the anti-rabies treatment recommended by the United States Public Health Service. Your doctor will also treat you for other possible infections that could be caused from the bite.
- ❖ Remember, wildlife is a part of our natural heritage. Enjoy it, respect it ... at a distance for the benefit of all concerned.
- ❖ For more information, contact your local health department or your local animal control at the following:

**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**In cooperation with the  
Virginia Department of Health**

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**246-2433**  
***For health information***

**ANIMAL CONTROL**  
**830-3310**  
***For animal exposures or bites***

Special thanks to Gold Canyon Multimedia for granting permission to reprint the raccoon photograph.

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## Rabies and Animal Bites



**What You  
Should Know  
And  
What You  
Should Do**

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## FACTS ABOUT RABIES

- ❖ Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. It kills almost any mammal or human that gets sick from it.
- ❖ The rabies virus lives in the saliva and brain of rabid animals. It can be transmitted through a bite or by getting saliva or brain tissue in a wound or in the eye or mouth.
- ❖ Only mammals get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians do not. Skunks, bats, foxes, raccoons, dogs, cats, and some farm animals are most likely to get rabies. Rabbits, squirrels, rats and mice, and pets like gerbils and hamsters seldom get it.
- ❖ Rabies can be prevented in cats, dogs, ferrets, and some livestock with a rabies vaccination. For most wild and exotic animals, there are no rabies vaccines available that have been shown to protect them.

## WHAT IF I HAVE A BAT IN MY HOUSE?



Any live or dead bat that may have had contact with a person, should be tested for rabies. If the bat cannot be found or has escaped, contact the local health department or animal control, and see a doctor as soon as possible.

## RABIES AND HUMANS

- ❖ Because of improved rabies vaccination programs for pets and better treatment for people who are bitten, rabies cases among humans in this country are rare. The best way to prevent the spread of rabies to humans is by keeping pets vaccinated



## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP CONTROL RABIES

- ❖ Have your veterinarian vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock. Keep the vaccinations up-to-date.
- ❖ If your pet is attacked or bitten by another animal, report it to the local health or animal control authorities. Be sure your vaccinated dog, cat, or ferret receives a booster vaccination.
- ❖ Limit the possibility of exposure by keeping your animals on your property. Don't let pets roam free. Also, don't leave garbage or pet food outside. It may attract wild or stray animals.
- ❖ Remember . . . wild animals should not be kept as pets. They are a potential rabies threat to their owners and to others. Enjoy all wild animals from a distance, **even if they seem friendly**. A rabid animal sometimes acts tame. If you see an animal acting strangely, report it to the city or county animal control department. **Don't go near it yourself.**

## IF YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN

- ❖ **Don't panic** . . . but don't ignore the bite, either. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water. Washing thoroughly will greatly lessen the chance of infection. Give first aid as you would for any wound.
- ❖ If possible, capture the animal under a large box or can, or at least identify it before it runs away. **Don't** try to pick the animal up. Call an animal control or law enforcement officer to come get it.
- ❖ If it's a wild animal that must be killed, don't damage the head. The brain will be needed to test for rabies. Don't let anyone destroy wild animals at random just because there may be a rabies outbreak in your area. Only a few wild animals will be carrying rabies.
- ❖ Call your doctor immediately. Explain how you got the bite and follow the doctor's advice.



**Report the bite to the local health department.**